

announced policy of January 7, 2003, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

AUTISM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, for some time now I have been coming to the floor on a regular basis talking about children who are autistic. A few short years ago, one in 10,000 children in this country was autistic. Now it is more like one in 200. This is a 50-fold increase. We have an absolute epidemic.

The major culprit in most people's minds is the mercury, mercury that has been in vaccines as a preservative. Since the 1930s and 1940s, they have been putting mercury in vaccines as part of a preservative called thimerosal. As children started getting more and more vaccinations, the amount of mercury in their systems grew and grew and grew. And now children get between 25 and 30 shots before they go to kindergarten. The cumulative effect of all that mercury in their brains is causing severe neurological problems for these children, their families, and the entire country.

We did a report, a report that took 4 years in studying the problems with these vaccinations, and most people in the country are not even aware of the problem. A lot of people do not even know what autism is. But the fact of the matter is an awfully large number of these children who have been damaged and who are autistic, we believe and our report believes and shows, that they were damaged by the mercury that was injected into their bodies along with the vaccinations they were getting.

Mr. Speaker, I have been coming to the floor for some time, and every time I come to the floor I talk about letters I have been receiving from families of children and pictures of children who are autistic and their stories about how their child became autistic. We have found from all these letters that the children get their vaccinations, four, five, six, and seven shots in 1 day, in many cases; and within a very short time after that these children who are normal, who make eye-to-eye contact, who laugh and walk and do all the things that normal children do, they change. They no longer communicate, they no longer look you in the eye, they bang their heads against the wall, they have chronic diarrhea and constipation alternatively. And the problems go on and on.

I have a letter here from a fellow who says it has cost him his house. He had to sell his house, \$45,000. He had to borrow money. He is in debt up to here, and he has nowhere to turn. The Vaccine Injury Compensation Fund, which was supposed to help these people, it

was created to help these people whose children were damaged by vaccines, shows no hope.

Many of these people did not get in within the 3-year time limit because they did not know what caused their child to be autistic. They did not even know their child was autistic because the doctors misdiagnosed them. So they missed the 3-year statute of limitations, and they have nowhere to go.

So we are trying to get the Senate and the House together to work out a program where children can get into the program, can have their case reviewed. And if it is proven that they were damaged by the mercury in the vaccines, or the MMR vaccine, then they can get restitution from this fund. But we are having a terrible time because the pharmaceutical companies are fighting us because they are afraid of the liability they might incur.

So we come down here every day, and we beat on this issue and beat on this issue and will continue to do that until we get some positive results, because these parents, and we have thousands of these letters, thousands, and it is growing every day, these parents have no place to turn. These children are going to grow up living to be 65, 70 years old and the taxpayers of this country are going to be taking care of them. That is the only place they can turn because the Vaccine Injury Compensation Fund is not doing what it is supposed to do to help these children.

I wish everyone would look at these pictures, my colleagues back in their offices and those on the floor. These are normal children who were damaged by vaccines. Their parents have no place to turn, and the pharmaceutical companies have turned their backs on them. That is criminal and something has to be changed.

HONORING HAITIAN-AMERICANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Haitian-Americans. Yesterday, May 18, marked the 200th year of Haitian history, that country's Flag Day celebration. They celebrated in Haiti, and not only in Haiti but also in Miami, Florida, in the place we know as Little Haiti.

This was a celebration of a very proud people, a people that have invested so much into our democracy that we have here in the United States, and not only now but in the beginning. America was founded on the basic democratic beliefs of cultures and values, of people from every country in the world.

There are over 1.2 million Haitians living in the United States today, with 700,000 of them in Florida. I honor those Americans, those Haitian-Americans who continue to believe in the guiding principles of their country. Flag Day represents unity and

strength. That unity has been seen throughout American history since the 1700s during the American Revolution at Savannah. Haitian-Americans fought side by side, prevailing against Britain and creating an independence of 13 colonies. Haitian-Americans are woven within the very history and fabric of this country.

Mr. DEUTSCH. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am not alone on this floor this evening in introducing this Sense of Congress to establish a Haitian-American Heritage Month; and so I yield to my colleague, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DEUTSCH).

Mr. DEUTSCH. Mr. Speaker, I too join with my colleague in supporting this resolution, but also speaking out really to help educate our colleagues in the country about the 200th adversary of Haitian Flag Day. It is a significant event, the bicentennial of the second oldest republic in the Western Hemisphere, Haiti, that joined the United States in seeking its freedom from European colonialists in the early 1800s.

The Haitian people have fought for 200 years, have been part of a movement towards democracy not just fighting side by side with Americans but side by side with other Western Hemisphere countries in seeking their own democracy. We have had a community also in south Florida as well as throughout the country that has grown and prospered and, in fact, many of their friends and relatives today still seek that opportunity that all of us have sought in the United States of America.

Today, we have Haitian-Americans that are detained in Krome, in prison really, in the United States, in Miami-Dade County, some of whom, by court order, have been ordered to be released, and yet Attorney General Ashcroft has prevented their release by categorizing Haiti as a terrorist State at this point in time.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I would now yield to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE).

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I commend the gentleman for bringing this very important issue to the floor. I too would like to add my support.

Haitian-Americans, Haiti in particular, had a great deal to do with the development of this country during our fight for independence in the Revolutionary War. There was a battalion in the Savannah battles where Haiti sent troops to fight alongside the colonies against the British.

Also, I think that because of Haiti's battle against Napoleon, one of the first countries to defeat the Napoleon Army, France was very strapped for cash, and it therefore had to sell the Louisiana Territory to the United States for a very, very low sum of money because they needed money

after their wars. That opened up the great West. If it had not been for the Haitian country depleting funds from the French Government, the progress of moving west would not have happened so soon. So we are tied together.

As a matter of fact, Simon Bolivar lived in Haiti; and he went to liberate South America. So Haiti has had a tremendous importance in the growth and development of not only this country but the entire Western Hemisphere, and I appreciate the gentleman yielding to me.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time once again, I want to thank both the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE) and my colleague, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DEUTSCH), for joining in; and we would ask other Members to join us in this resolution.

Yesterday, May 18, marking the 200th year of Haitian history, Haitian Americans and the country of Haiti celebrated their Flag Day. They celebrated in the country of Haiti with great fanfare on the grounds of the Haiti's capitol. In the United States Haitian Americans celebrated Flag Day with cultural events, including ceremonies, concerts, and prayer vigils. Haitian Americans in my district celebrated countywide and particularly in an area that is fondly known as "Little Haiti" to commemorate their Flag Day.

America is founded on basic democratic beliefs and cultural values of people from every country in this world. There are over 1.2 million Haitians living in the United States today, with over 700,000 in Florida. I honor Haitian Americans for continuing to believe in the guiding phrase that is included below the country arms in Haiti's flag, "In Union There Is Strength."

That unity has been seen throughout American History since the 1700s. During the American Revolution at Savannah, Haitians and Americans fought side by side prevailing against Britain and creating the independence of the 13 colonies.

Haitians Americans are woven into the fabric of American culture, economy, and politics. They are owners of newspapers, and radio stations, and have television programming and varied commercial businesses nationwide.

In the month of May, in addition to Flag Day, Haitian Americans also celebrate Labor Day on May 1 and Haiti's Mother's Day is the last Sunday in May.

It is my request that my colleagues offer their support for the legislation I introduce today expressing the sense of this body that there should be established a "Haitian-American Heritage Month." I deem it only befitting that the month of May be designated as an official month of ceremonies and celebrations, as it holds such historical significance to Haitian Americans in our great Nation.

TRIBUTE TO JOHN WEAVER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KENNEDY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. KENNEDY of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor today to speak in honor of a great Minnesotan, a man I am honored to call friend,

John Weaver. John is a lifetime resident of Anoka, Minnesota, the Hall-loween Capital of the World; and a city I am honored to represent.

John has had an extraordinary life over the last 75 years, and the way he has lived that life is truly an example to others. Graduating as the valedictorian of Anoka High School in 1946, he then attended the University of Minnesota, where he pursued a degree in civil engineering. While in college, John still managed to serve his country admirably aboard the USS *Iowa* and the USS *Boxer* in the Pacific Ocean while in the Navy Reserve Officer Training Corps.

After graduating and building a thriving business, he never lost sight of what was truly important.

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His highest priority was and remains his family, his wife Jill and their three children, Jeff, Sara and Martha. Even with his commitment, or frankly because of his commitment to his family, he was drawn to service in the community.

Starting with his service on the Anoka-Hennepin school board in 1971, he made it clear that he wanted to give something back to the community, and the people he served recognized this, returning him to the school board for two additional terms before they made it clear that they wanted him to use his abilities to help all Minnesotans. As a reward for his tireless dedication to improving the community, John's peers elected him to the Minnesota House of Representatives in 1978. He distinguished himself by his service there.

Even after John left the State Capitol, he did not leave public service. Serving on the Anoka City Council beginning in 1983 and right up to the present day, John's energy has been put to good use for the community and the State of Minnesota. Despite his lengthy record of service and achievements in elected office, John has always looked for more opportunities for involvement. He was appointed and re-appointed to the Mississippi River Coordination Commission by President George Herbert Walker Bush and President Clinton. He also served on the Minnesota Metropolitan Council of Transportation Board and was involved in countless community activities, including helping with the Anoka County History Museum. His service has had an impact on the lives of people across the States and the country.

But I think his greatest impact is not just on what he has done for us today but the impact he will have in the future. He has been very involved with the Boy Scouts of America since he himself achieved Eagle rank more than half a century ago. His years of involvement with the Scouts, the number of young men that he has helped to guide their lives to good character and good citizenship are countless.

Mr. Speaker, Minnesota is called The Star of the North. With people like John Weaver, that star burns brightly.

Mr. KLINE. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. KENNEDY of Minnesota. I yield to the gentleman from Minnesota.

Mr. KLINE. Mr. Speaker, I would like to echo the praise of the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KENNEDY) for a great Minnesotan, a great American, and a man I am proud to call a friend. John Weaver is an exemplary citizen both of his community and of his Nation.

As a father of three, grandfather of six and loving husband, his dedication to his family is evident. But despite his family-first philosophy, he has continued to find time to serve his community. That makes his involvement all the more meaningful. A life-long resident of Anoka, John Weaver has served the Anoka City Council since 1983. In a true demonstration of what it means to serve, John Weaver saw a need and met it head on.

When asked why he decided to run, Weaver said, "Anoka is potentially at a crossroads. We have some interesting challenges, not the least of which is the financial picture."

Standing up for his community, John has fought tirelessly to ensure his small town is not overlooked by the State of Minnesota. John Weaver believes that it is important that the people of Anoka see a return on their taxes in the form of outstanding government services. He has gone far beyond advocating this message, personally setting an example to other community leaders.

He has a long resume of public service that the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KENNEDY) has already enumerated. Let me say his dedication to his community is clear, and it is an honor to recognize this fellow Minnesotan and a great American.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to be heard out of order for 5 minutes.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

TEXAS DEMOCRATS TAKE A STAND

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mrs. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I stand here to praise the actions last week of 50-plus Texas House Democrats, including the representatives from my county, Representative Roberto Alonzo, Yvonne Davis, Terri Hodge, Jesse Jones, Steve Wollens, and from the adjoining county of Tarrant, Lon Burnan, and my classmates of the class of 1972, Senfronia Thompson and Pete Laney.